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Pulpit

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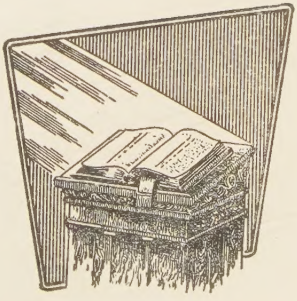

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

This month's themes are "Hope for Sinners" and "New Year Perspectives." Next month's topical emphases will be "Words for Anguished Lives" and "Lenten Pilgrimage."

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

Gift of Life by Wesley P. Ford, long-time friend and contributor to PULPIT PREACHING, contains twenty-nine three-page sermons on primary biblical and contemporary life themes. Written in the persuasion that "life is a sacred trust," this book illustrates what readers of this periodical know, that Dr. Ford has a gift for homiletic expression, a gift of insight, and a gift for the revealing of life's persistent spiritual concerns. (Bethany Press, 96 pp., $1.75.)

Sermons on Genesis by Harold A. Bosley, another generous PULPIT PREACHING contributor, presents twenty messages which search out the relevant truth of Genesis for modern churchmen and their social and personal lives. The author's skills as a preacher, prophet and interpreter are found in these sermons which possess vitality in content and implication, a ready understanding and application of religious truth, and an evangelical vigor. The sermons mirror the liberal mind. (Harper & Brothers, 206 pp., $3.75.)

Things That Remain, a selection of twenty sermons by the late Dean W. R. Inge of St. Paul's Cathedral, is a volume of rare significance. Here are

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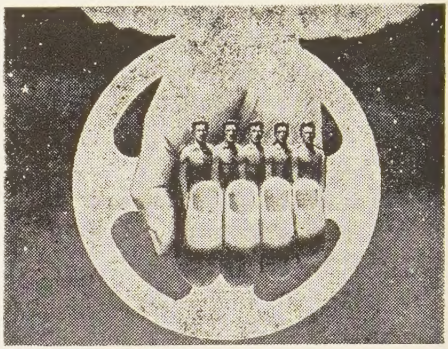
HUMAN BEINGS IN THE HAND OF GOD



Friedrich Rest, St. Paul's United Church of Christ, Evansville, Indiana

Five tiny human beings in a hand extending downward from a bright cloud is the picture in symbolic form of the thought of being held in the hand of God. Here is a great text: "If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there thy hand shall lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me"—(Ps. 139:9-10).

We cannot flee from God's presence, for He is everywhere. The "Wisdom of Solomon," written Circa 125-200 B. C., states the same truth, "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them," and the same message is expressed even more beautifully by the Good Shepherd: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My father, who has given them to me, is greater than all,

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Pulpit Preaching

Editors
CHARLES L. WALLIS
Keuka College Church
Keuka Park, N. Y.

CHARLES L. ALLEN
Grace Methodist Church
Atlanta, Georgia
E. PAUL HOVEY
The Federated Church
Lewiston, Idaho

Address sermon manuscripts and editorial correspondence to Rev. C. L. Wallis, Keuka College, Keuka Park, New York. Receipt will be acknowledged.

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GENE E. BARTLETT
FRANK A. COURT
WILLIAM McLEISTER 2nd
PAUL S. REES
CHARLES L. ALLEN

Hope For Sinners

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED

Gene E. Bartlett, First Baptist Church, Los Angeles, California

Few stories are quite as thrilling to us as those which tell of a rescue. It may be of a child lost in the woods. We all breathe a prayer of thanksgiving when he is found. It may be a plane down somewhere in the world. Everyone watches anxiously as the hours go by and a great sigh of relief goes around the world when the passengers are found and brought safely back. For such times we use a word that has sinew and strength in it. We say these persons have been "saved."

When one thinks of the everyday kind of religion we see, he may wonder why we also use that word in speaking of Christian experience. What is there that justifies so strong a word as that — saved? Whether we understand it or not, there is no question that the word has been used for centuries to tell what God has meant to those who find Him.

To understand about "saved" means we shall need to come at it through a few very simple and direct questions.

I

First, what are we saved from? Immediately some will have an answer that it is sin or lostness or punishment in life to come. All of that is profoundly true. Sin is a reality that shackles human life and men do get lost. Life does have eternal consequences. And there is a contrast in human destiny, as different as heaven and hell. But is there any other way of saying it? Whatever framework you may use to explain it, what is this reality from which we need to be saved?

Stated as simply as I know how, I believe we need desperately to be saved from a life that is centered in self. For one aspect of sin is self-centeredness. It is an attachment to self so deep that one has forgotten God. Lostness and the state of hell in a man's soul finally come from a life that is caught in what one theologian has called the "anxious intensity of self-absorption."

We need a picture or two to see it. In centuries past men had a belief that the earth was the center of the universe and everything including the sun revolved around it. Then came a deeper truth. The earth, in fact, was not the center but revolved around the sun. But how we resisted this discovery! No matter that the sun gave us our warmth and our healing and had the power to grow things, we didn't want to be out of the center of the universe. Even so, in the things of the spirit we resist putting ourselves out of the center of things. Our personal astronomy still insists that everything must revolve around us. It is that life which has set out upon the journey into misery. The astronomy of the soul is wrong. That person is trying to make something work that is predestined to failure. He is headed for trouble and misery.

Sooner or later a man who has put himself at the center of everything will be crying with Paul, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" He is caught in contradictions that can only bring pain and conflict. He is trying to save himself when he knows that it will take something outside himself. He has tried to love

self so long that he has lost the capacity to love anyone else, yet hungers for love from others.

Perhaps the simplest description of a man caught in this contradiction is that he is like a man trying to play tennis by himself. The poor man has taken on more than he can handle. He lobs the ball into the other court, leaps over the net, and tries to get to the ball before it bounces again. If he succeeds in lobbing it back over, he has to leap again so that he goes from crisis to crisis, moving toward exhaustion and finally despair. A man playing tennis with himself is no more of a contradiction than a man trying to live utterly upon self-reliance. That's both his sin and his hell. He would be the first to tell you that the day is coming when he needs to be saved from this futile and anxious game which he has started.

II

There is, of course, the second question, What are we saved to? It seems to me the answer is almost implied by all that we have said: we are saved to a life that is centered in God. A new system of personal astronomy has come in the soul of a man who is saved. He does not insist upon making the whole universe revolve around him. He finds his own orbit and lets life revolve around God. It is simple to say it. It is, indeed, a lifetime task to do it. But the answer to the redeemed life is in exactly that transformation.

What a difference that can make in our lives in this twentieth century! We hurry and are not sure where we are going. We seem always in the need of proving something to ourselves and are not sure what we are proving. We insist upon getting ahead and are not sure which way is forward. We scramble to have our own way yet are sick of it, wishing to God that He would lead us His way. We have all the means of self-satisfaction and the end of it usually is a satiation, so we are always looking for something novel to revive our hunger. From such a weary and vicious circle there is only one escape. It is a change of government in the heart of a man. It is putting God and God alone in the center where self has been.

III

But there is another question equally important. What are we saved for?

How often this is the forgotten question! Yet, how inescapable it is! Would we educate a child without ever having some idea as to where his education is to be used? Even so, a man's salvation is something to be put to work. To many a church member the word of God might well come. If you are really saved, let us see the evidence of it. And what is that evidence? What, indeed, but a life centered in loving service. This is one of the marks of the saved soul. It is turned outward, no longer content to withdraw from the storehouse of life but seeking to make its own contribution.

What wonderful discoveries are waiting for some of us in the remaining years of our lives if we will ask what we are meant to live for. Some of us listened with fascination a few days ago to the unfolding of the story of a service rendered by Mr. and Mrs. Chester Scott in Africa. Mr. Scott was a builder in Santa Monica. Yet, there came to him a conviction that God had some place where he was calling him. At that time he heard of the urgency of a need in Africa, the need to help erect buildings for our mission enterprises. So Mr. and Mrs. Scott volunteered for four years of service. In forty-eight months they built forty-six buildings! It's an amazing story of service rendered. But a part of the story is what has happened to the Scotts themselves. There has come a sense of fulfillment. They know what it is to find a place to invest life.

Now, when one hears this kind of story the reaction is a natural one.

He says to himself, But I can't go to Africa. What can I do then to find this fulfillment? Phillips Brooks spoke to that once when he said, "When will we Christians learn that not new and strange tasks but new holiness in old tasks is the meaning of Christian service." So, the mark of our salvation may well be parents who bring new love and understanding to their home. It urgently needs to be teachers who are teaching not subjects but children. It needs to be businessmen and professional men who carry to their daily tasks the vocation of serving Christ. It needs to be those of us who carry on the hundreds of daily contacts in offices and stores and places of service. For wherever there is encounter with people, there some kind of spirit is imparted one to the other. It can be the spirit of Jesus Christ.

We have faced a basic question. And we have come to an answer. We are saved from the tragedy and the misery of a life centered in self to the victory and joy of a life centered in God for the purpose of a life centered in loving service. Suppose we want it to happen to us. How do we do it? Do we just make up our minds to it?

Anyone who has earnestly tried it knows this is not the answer. It leaves us standing rather before the meaning of Jesus Christ. For in Him God has given us the means by which that journey to new life can be made. Christ came and said, "Follow me." That's something everyone could understand. You can do it one step at a time. You don't have to wait until all the theories are made clear. You can still say Yes to One who has invited you with the words, "Follow me." And that is the way that leads to life. Believe on Christ and follow Him, and that journey from a self-centered to a God-centered life shall come about with all the joy that it brings .

THE JOY OF SALVATION

Frank A. Court, St. Paul Methodist Church, Lincoln, Nebraska

When a jailor in fear and trembling asked Paul "What must I do to be saved?" he asked a universal question. It is at the heart of all religion. As far back as we can go in the history of life we find this question upon the lips of men. Also it is as new as the latest novel, or play on Broadway, or the seeking quest of our own heart. Many would deem it life's most important question.

There is a joyous sound to the word "salvation." It means deliverance. Thus through all the Bible you find the joy of salvation. Think for a moment of the joy that comes into life as out of hopelessness we are brought into hope, or from death into life. No wonder the church centers its great hymns in the theme of salvation. Even in death we sing, "Safe in the harbor guide, O receive my soul at last."

The great book on salvation is, of course, the Bible. So if we wish a definition of this great word we will not turn to the dictionary, but to the Book of Life. Here you will find many meanings, but only one theme. The theme is the everlasting love of God that becomes a part of life and opens doors of spiritual power until one is able to find the joy of salvation.

In the Old Testament the theme of salvation may be gathered up in the great word of Micah: "He hath showed the, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?" Sometimes we walk with God through steep ways of sorrow and trial, or through pathways of service and sharing, and always through prayer and discipline. It is the highway of salvation when one can truly fulfill the requirements of Micah in

doing justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with God.

When we turn to the New Testament we not only find all of the saving grace of the Old Testament but something new. Here Christ is portrayed as the Saviour of men. He is God's loving hand stretched out to help. He is "the Word made flesh, full of grace and glory."

Jesus set himself to saving people from, first of all, those forces that shut them off from an abundant and full life. There was salvation from demons, which would correspond to evil, moody or defeated thoughts, and salvation from diseases of both the flesh and the spirit. Christ's great statement on salvation was, "I am come that ye may have life and have it more abundantly." Secondly, there was salvation from death. Jesus was far more concerned over the death of the spirit of God within life than He was with physical death. He said, "Fear not those who can kill the body but after that have no power, but fear rather those who can kill the spirit." The fear of physical death was universal; life was hard and death was on every hand. But Jesus offered a way of overcoming death through eternal life and His promise, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

Harold Bosley points out that when Jesus talked to people He was certain of three things: "first, that He was talking to persons who were lost in some sense or other of the term; two, that they could be saved, or found; three, that they shared with God the responsibility of being being saved." And who would dare deny that if Jesus were talking to any group today the same assumptions would still hold true.

Our need for the joyous message of salvation is heightened by our increasing disillusionment in false ways of salvation. If any age could have thought its way out of world-shattering difficulties, surely our intellectual leaders would have found the pathway. Man has never been better educated or more confused than at the present time. We know that knowledge alone will not save us.

Or, if mechanical skills and gadgets held the answer to salvation, most of us could ride to heaven in a late model car. We have an automatic answer to most of our mechanical needs, but with our jet planes, deep freezers, and automatic dishwashers we have a deep sense of lostness and a feeling of sincere apprehension.

Or, if socialization could save us, there are enough social schemes and social helps in life to bring in the Kingdom of God. Let us readily admit the great good that arises from much of the social thinking of our time, but let us never be blinded to its peril of robbing life of initiative, responsibility, the joy of work and of sharing risks out of which great living comes.

Dorothy Sayer, who writes detective novels, as well as good theology, portrays life as the spirit that makes music on the black and white keys. The music is not in the key, but in the spirit that plays upon it. Any key can make harsh, jarring sounds as well as glorious music. So science, mechanical skills and social plans are keys of life. With a dedicated spirit playing the organ of life there can be deathless music. But when a Hitler or a Stalin, or any destroying force, takes over the music of life, it becomes a discordant funeral march of death to everything we hold as beautiful or worth while. There is no salvation apart from God, His mercy and His love. There is no other way in this or any day. Now, as of old, "straight is the way and narrow is the gate that leadeth into life."

A generation that has been called "lost" and that has known three wars certainly understands the desperate need for God's forgiving mercy and love. How tragic it is that life becomes too much for so many. There are in the United States 182 state institutions for the mentally sick. One

out of every twenty persons born in this country will spend part of his life in these institutions. The increasing tensions of life simply become too great for people to bear. Others who do not "crack up" try to "break out" from life instead of really finding a way of salvation. These ways of escape may be either cheap drug store methods of sleeping powders, aspirin, or Hadacol. There are between two and three million chronic alcoholics, slaves to the habit of drinking. Much of the thirst for alcohol betrays a symptom of something fundamentally wrong with life. From war between nations to inner war within an individual we see our desperate need for salvation and ask again the old question, "What must I do to be saved?"

III

There must have been some other dream in the mind of God, when life first began, than the long record of wars, tragedy and defeat. In the Old Book we read the story of God's unending love. Whatever may be your interpretation of Genesis, we do read that God looked upon life and said that it was good. Then evil intervened between man and God and man hid himself from the voice of God. Down throughout the ages man has been playing hide-and-seek with his better self as he has shut himself off from being at home in the presence of life's Highest.

There is no truer sentence in all the Bible than the much-loved words, "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believed in him should not perish but have everlasting life!" Well, surely this world of war is not the world that God "so loved." This cannot be the final answer.

Anl there is no doubt that God loves law and order. We trace His way through the scientist's quest and know that God's laws are dependable. The stars come nightly to the sky, cause and effect are never separated, the hand of God is steady and sure. In the midst of change God is unchanging. Isn't salvation living with eternal ways in the midst of life's changing days? Emerson put it, "Listening to what the centuries say as against the hours."

And God loves wholeness. In the Bible it is called the "Grace of God." In every situation there is life's healing touch. We find it in nature as the ravages of war are soon covered by green, growing things. We find it in disease as the forces of the body rush to do battle with the intruder. Is it not salvation that brings our broken dreams, our thwarted hopes, our dissipated lives back into the wholeness of God, by allowing His grace to heal the broken and bruised life? Isn't this our thought in regard to Christ? When man was far from the thought of God, He sent the Christ as his final Word of love and mercy. In the words of the Scripture, "not that we loved Him, but that He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins." "We touch Him in life's throng and press and we are whole again."

And it is very certain God does not intend to leave our world as it is now. Scientists tell us that we live in an expanding universe. Creation is not finished and the last chapter has not been written.

So we sense that God is in the battle of life everywhere. His presence is made known by beds of pain, in testing moments of trial, temptation's fatal hour and life's most bitter defeat. God is on every battlefield, being crucified again in the horror of it as far-too-youthful lives are smothered out before dreams come true. He tramps the city streets — where youth betrays His dream, where old age can only wait, and where life everywhere has a devaluated sign of cheapness. He calls through Calvary, "You were bought with a price." Isn't salvation throwing yourself wholeheartedly on God's side in the struggle of life between good and evil? There is

no neutrality. The everlasting choice is before us. Salvation's joyful sound and the joy bells of heaven ring only as someone responds to the deathless challenge of Christ, "Take up your cross and follow me."

Christ preached and taught the judgment of life. We all know that we meet judgment every single waking minute. God is not mocked. The record of history states: "In the long run it is well with that which is good and ill with that which is evil." Our wars and troubles are judgments on our materialism and secularism and on our disobeying of God's eternal commands. But the glory of life is that it need not be so. There is still God's way of salvation.

IV

Are we not on sure ground when we state that salvation is never a mechanical affair between your life and either a church, a formula, or a creed. Salvation is a process of growth in the love of God. The Church has always believed that you "go on to perfection." Some people evidently believe that when they are saved they can take their ease in Zion. The great saints of the ages have always made of life a spiritual pilgrimage with the greatest glory always on ahead.

When Paul told the jailor, "You must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved," he spent the rest of the night interpreting the meaning of that phrase to the seeking adherent. Salvation always begins with desire. It is a desire to know God's will for life. The Book of Hebrews states that one must have faith that God is. The Alcoholic Anonymous group puts as their first step a belief in God and His helping power. Until a maan knows that he cannot go on alone and realizes his need of the love of God, he cannot begin the journey of salvation. So we know that there never will be peace until there is the sincere desire for peace within the hearts of men. If we would ever sacrifice and work as hard for peace as we do for war, it would come in this generation.

The desire to know God comes to us in many ways. Sometimes it is out of our desperate need as when the Prodigal Son came to himself. It came to Moses in the desert as the voice of God called him back to a duty and a task that needed to be performed in leading the Israelites out of Egypt to the rim of the Promised Land.

Sometims it comes through the high call of Christ as He stands before our life saying again, as He did to Peter of old, "Come ye after Me and I will make you a fisher of men."

Sometimes it comes as a parent holds his child in his arms and recognizes his need of God's love that the child may be nurtured in love, and he takes the babe to the temple, as Mary took Christ, and once again the old words of Simeon are repeated, "Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen the salvation of the Lord."

Sometimes it comes in the joy and holy hush of a worship service as it came to Isaiah of old when he saw "the Lord high and lifted up."

Sometimes it comes through struggle and the overcoming of doubts as it came to Thomas as he knelt exclaiming, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief."

Hosea made the great discovery through suffering; Amos, through the righteous voice of God; and John, through the gift of Christ's love. It is not how the desire is awakened, but your response that is important in salvation's joyous experience.

So in our lives there must be the integrity of desire, the sincere, seeking mind and the surrendered will. It is "if with all your heart ye truly seek Me," that we, in turn, come to know God's will for our life.

Salvation also comes as we recognize that there is a divine spark in the life of every person. It was stated in Genesis, "God breathed into man and man became a living soul." So you may call it repentence, confes-

sion, forgiveness, or conversion. But salvation is a process of nurturing the soul-power of life.

Certainly it means prayer and communion with God's Spirit. In Dr. Fosdick's phrase, "it means prayer as an eternal battle ground" where life's lowest is brought under the control of life's highest. Dr. Ralph Sockman states that at times prayer for him is holding his life up to the white light of Christ. When you buy a suit the color of it, under artificial light, often seems different when seen in the light of day. So our life seen in the artificial light of man's desire is often far different when we see ourselves truly in the light of Christ. So in the early morning Dr. Sockman reviews the thoughts and acts of yesterday in the white light of Christ's brilliancy and perfect life, and then he holds up the plans of the day before the penetrating rays of Christ's eternal truth. How does our life look in the white light of Christ that seeks out each furtive, hidden place within our life?

Our life also needs great worship. Here we study God's Word that we may not be religiously illiterate. Here is the joy of being with others who too are seeking God. Here is the joy of joining the chorus in singing the great hymns. Here is the joining with others in the Christian task of service. Salvation is also nurturing the spiritual power of life through membership in the church of the living God.

Christian salvation is knowing that in Christ there is God's redemptive power for the building of a better world. When we see Christ shouldering His Cross and going to Calvary, we recognize the way the world will be won to the Spirit of God. Here is life poured out and love's redeeming power. Through Calvary there is a creative force released in life that evil can never stop. This is the final answer of love. It is God's great, redemptive power.

So salvation is always the act or dedication and committal to God's way of life. It is joining ourself with God's creative forces that bring into life the Christ-like way. It is the fulfillment of Paul's great statement, "Love suffereth long and is kind, love envieth not, love vaunteth not, is not easily provoked, seeketh not its own, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

It is the discovery in your life of the power of God that enables you to overcome. A mother was left with three children to raise. How she did it always seemed to be a miracle to those who knew her. She had to work to support the family. The children had to help and yet they turned out well in school. One son is now a famous minister in Chicago. He likes to tell the story of when a neighbor asked the mother how she did it. The mother replied, "It was all through the grace of God. Just when I thought I couldn't go on some unexpected help came. When I was at the end of my own resources, the grace of God always picked me up and steadied me until I could go on again."

In Christ there is God's power to pick us up and steady us until, in the fellowship of a great love, we, too, can go on to know salvation's joyous sound. Really, do we not all desire to know the salvation of our God and to join the great trek of spiritual adventurers who have followed the Way of Christ? It is not too early, nor too late, but now is the time to make this spiritual pilgrimage that leads from death to life. So let us be on our way!

THE TRAGEDY OF ALMOST BEING A CHRISTIAN

William McLeister 2nd, Beverly Heights United Presbyterian Church, Mount Lebanon, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Scripture: Acts 26:19-32

We look today at one of the most dramatic passages in all of the New Testament — the appeal of the Apos-

tle Paul before King Agrippa. I would have you go in your mind's eye to the governor's palace at Caesarea Philippi and there behold this dramatic scene which took place as recorded by Luke in the Book of Acts. As you watch the Apostle Paul standing in defense before the king and the governor, you are looking at the tragedy of almost being a Christian.

As we view this scene, let us bear in mind that there is a higher court that takes precedence over all the courts of earth; that there is a "Judge enthroned in splendor" who sits on His sovereign seat and who can reverse all the decisions of the courts of earth. Let us also remember that one day each of us shall stand before that Judge and shall give final account for the disposition which he has made of an immortal soul. We shall view this drama in three acts.

Act I

Perhaps few men were ever farther apart in their personal makeup and in their outlook on life than the two central characters in this drama, King Agrippa and the Apostle Paul. First, these two men were diametrically opposed because of the worlds in which they lived. Agrippa lived in a Roman world, a world of mundane things. He was an Apostate Jew who had been raised in all the culture and power of Rome. He was the last of a line of kings, a line dying out and hence one who personified a dying age. The light, the flame had gone and only the embers smoldered. This man had none of the strength of his predecessors. He realized that life was going from him and the only logical attitude was to get the most out of it while it still lasted. He thought in terms of power, in terms of politics, in terms of Roman legions, and yet, he also had the benefit, since he was a Hellenized Jew, of knowing something of the ancient prophets of Israel.

On the other hand, the prisoner standing before him lived in a totally different world. He lived in a world that was just born—a new world spiritually reborn through the power of the risen christ. The entire life of this man had been transformed because he had encountered Jesus Christ in a personal experience on the road to Damascus. That experience had transformed the whole outlook upon life of Saul of Tarsus.

Today, the same two categories exist. There are literally millions in this twentieth century world who live in the same world in which Agrippa lived, a world of power, a world of politics, a world of mundane things; people to whom the most important thing in life is the stock market, the Wall Street Journal, and the dividends which are declared for the current quarter; those who look at life through the eyes of the unleashing of the scientific wonders of our age with its new power, the possibility of space travel and all the rest. But there are also those — and we thank God for them — who, like Paul, live in a different world, a world that is spiritual, putting the things of Jesus Christ first and letting all else fall into its secondary place. These are the people who, like this missionary apostle, have met Christ in a personal experience and because of that encounter have been transformed into new creatures whose citizenship is in heaven and who abide merely as colonists in this world.

These two characters differed not only in the worlds in which they lived but also in their attitudes toward the most important thing in the universe, the claims of Jesus Christ upon a human life. This fearless missionary was standing there in that palace room of Portius Festus boldly declaring the claims of Jesus Christ, the risen Redeemer. To that fiery little missionary, Jesus Christ was the most important thing in the universe and nothing else really mattered. Agrippa didn't care whether Jesus Christ was alive or dead. Whether the power of God was on the side

of the Roman government or not was to him merely an academic question. All of this philosophizing about things religious to Agrippa was irrelevant and inconsequential. It had no effect on the grain market; it didn't matter to the Roman empire and it didn't matter to King Agrippa, this ruler of a petty kingdom to the northeast of Festus' province.

But the same two categories exist today. There are countless thousands —and I'm afraid there are some on church rolls — to whom it does not matter one iota whether Jesus Christ is alive or dead. To them, He is simply a pious, religious name, two thousand years old. So, too, there are those to whom the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which this missionary declared there before the king and the governor, amounts to simply a religious superstition based on a legend or a pious belief which a group of people cling to because it serves as an opiate against the ills of their generation — a kind of religious tranquilizer. These people have no objection to a belief of that sort if it helps people over the hard places of life. But to them it matters not; it's irrelevant whether Jesus Christ remained in the grave or arose from the grave; it has no meaning or application to their existence. But, thank God, there are those to whom the risen Christ is a personal experience; to whom this risen Christ is One who has come into human hearts and lives transforming them into new creatures so that old things are constantly passing away and all of existence is becoming new. There they stand, Paul and Agrippa, two characters in complete contrast, diametrically opposed as far apart as the east is from the west.

Act II

For three years the Apostle Paul has been a prisoner at Caesarea. He was taken there by the Roman guards in Jerusalem following a riot when the Jews mobbed Paul and were going literally to tear him to pieces. Forty men took a sacred vow that they would neither eat nor drink until they had secured the death of this leader of the Christion movement, the Apostle Paul. Thus, this man was whisked away and placed in the custody of Governor Felix, procurator of Judea. You may recall that the Apostle Paul preached the Gospel before Felix until that governor trembled, but then indulged in immortal, spiritual procrastination and said to him, "Go thy way for the time and when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." But the convenient season of repentence never came and though Felix heard Paul preach many times, never again had he an opportunity, apparently, to respond to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

Now Portius Festus has succeeded him and Paul is still a prisoner at Caesarea. The Jews of Jerusalem appealed to Festus to have Paul taken back to Jerusalem for trial. Paul caught wind of it and knew that it was a plot to assassinate him so he appealed on the power of his Roman citizenship for a trial before the Supreme Court of the empire of Rome and Festus found it necessary to honor his appeal to Caesar. However, Festus, as was required by the Roman government, had to send a brief or a statement of the trial up to that period. Now Festus didn't understand all these quarrelings among the Jews about the resurrection of one Jesus of Nazareth and all these other matters which to him were quite foreign. He was perplexed and didn't know how he would send a report, when suddenly, to his great relief, he was notified of an impending visit by King Agrippa and his sister, Bernice. Festus knew that Agrippa was a man who was acquainted with the Jewish prophets and the Jewish customs and he could certainly help Festus make a report. Agrippa and Bernice arrived and Agrippa asked to hear in person this famous prisoner.

Now go with me to the palace of Festus. There in that typical Roman

hall, with its massive colonnades, we see standing about the walls the great Italian Band, those crack soldiers from Rome. Seated on the podium were Agrippa, Bernice, and Governor Festus. The trumpet blast is heard and the prisoner is led in chained to a Roman soldier as he has been twenty-four hours a day since he became a prisoner of the empire. As he stands there before Agrippa, Festus gives a summary of the charges brought against Paul. Then Agrippa says, "Paul, thou are permitted to speak for thyself." With that, this great saint of God steps forward, raises his hand, clinking the chains, and begins his great appeal. What a tremendous speech it was and yet it was not a speech. It was not a defense. It was a sermon, for he preached the Gospel to this licentious ruler, Agrippa, about whom it was common gossip that he lived in sensual sin with his sister Bernice — a man to whom the moral code meant nothing.

Paul began with an exordium, complimenting Agrippa that he, Paul, should be privileged to make his defense before one who knew so well the Jewish law and customs. Having complimented Agrippa, this great, fiery Apostle began to preach the unsearchable riches of the Gospel, pulling no punches, but declaring that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead. This preacher gave his personal testimony. He told how he had been raised as a pious youth under the Jewish religion; how he had persecuted the church with all his power; and then that dramatic, never-to-be-forgotten day when he met Christ face to face on the road to Damascus. He went on to point out his commission — how God had called him out to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles; to open the eyes blinded with sin; to lead them from Satan, and darkness unto light and God; and to bring them into the inheritance of faith in Jesus Christ. He preached until Festus could stand it no longer. The governor interrupted the defender.

"Paul," says Festus, "much learning hath made thee mad. Man, you're crazy; this religion has gone to your head; you've studied too much." I wonder if the church of Jesus Christ would have more power today if her preachers, her teachers and her members occasionally received some invectives flung at them by the unbelieving world who because of their passion for Jesus Christ and a desire to win the lost were called "crazy" or "peculiar" or "unbalanced" or some other indication of mental aberration. But instead, we become chameleons, we blend into the color of our background and we avoid all offense to the world. We're just nice Christians. We disturb no one.

This man didn't care what they called him. He replied with admirable self-control. He said, "Most worthy Festus, I am not mad, but I declare unto you the truth of God. This thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa can testify to what I say." "Agrippa, knowest thou the prophet," said Paul to the king, catching him completely by surprise with a stroke of genius. And before Agrippa could answer, Paul answered for him, "I know thou knowest the prophets." "Of course you do." Paul could tell by the expression on his face that this was familiar territory over which Agrippa was traveling and Paul could also probably see in the faces of Bernice and Agrippa indications of an uncomfortable hearing because when the Gospel is declared in the presence of sin, there is discomfort always. People are made uncomfortable and so they should.

Act III

What would Agrippa say to this? What would you have said? Agrippa said, "Paul, almost thou persuadest me to become a Christian." Almost a Christian! Whereupon the Apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit, given words as God promises to give words

to His servant in the time said, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am" – and then holding up his hands in chains added – "except for these bonds."

Before we look closer at those statements, notice the condition which Paul attached to himself, "Except these bonds." Could you wish that someone might be as good a Christian as your godly parents or perhaps as good a Christian as one of the twelve apostles? Or could you as Paul stand before an unbeliever and say, "I wish that you were a Christian just like myself, except for some malformity of the body or some unfortunate circumstance in life." What would your exception be? Would you say, I would have you to become a Christian just like myself, except for my uncontrollable temper; except for my churlish disposition; except for my sensuous imagination; except for my loose tongue that condemns and criticizes before it has all the facts; except for my worrisome spirit that is striving constantly to keep up with the Joneses; or except a hundred other things that stand as blights and blocks upon your testimony and which you could never recommend to an unbeliever as a pattern to a Christian life? Here was a man who could stand before unbelievers and say, "I wish that you could become a Christian like myself, except for these long journeys over snow-capped mountains and burning deserts; except for the bite of the lash upon my back and the bruise of the rod; except for the stoning; except for the disappointments of unfaithful churches and all the rest." Could you recommend your life to unbelievers as a pattern for Christian living? If you can't, then thank God that you have a God who forgives sin and ask Him to forgive those black spots that mar your testimony because we're all meant to be living witnesses for Jesus Christ.

Now look at the reaction of this ruler: "Almost thou persaudest me to be a Christian." What did he mean? Well, Bible scholars differ on the interpretation. Some think that Agrippa was sneering at Paul and saying, "Do you think that you're going to convert me too to your religion?" Or some think that he was implying that Paul wanted him to be a missionary to win Festus! Still others think that he was laughing at Paul just as the cultured and refined when faced with an unavoidable decision regarding their relationship to Jesus Christ from which they cannot wiggle out, will pass it all off with a supercilious smile. They'll just laugh it off and say, "Ha, ha, so you want me to be a Christian too, do you? Ha, ha, that's a joke."

I believe that Agrippa was convicted of sin. I like the King James translation here. I think that Paul had touched a silent chord in the heart of the ruler and I think that as that man sat there next to his sister and thought of the sin in his own life and hers that he began to realize that he had to do something about his sin and that he was moving closer and closer to the Christian position, approaching the line where he would cross into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christion." But almost is not enough. It must be altogether. There's no gray zone in the Kingdom of God; you're either in or you're out. As the children sing, "One door and only one and yet its sides are two; inside and outside; on which side are you?"

Agrippa was on the outside and Paul was on the inside, and this man of God was inviting that king to come into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. What kept him away? Was it his pride? Was it because he thought back to the Herod in his line before whom Christ had stood for trial? How could he, Agrippa, cast himself upon the mercy of a crucified Jew? Was it the love of this world's goods, like Demas whom we shall look at later this summer? Did he hesitate to give

up his summer palace and all the conveniences of being a ruler? It could have been any of a hundred things but he stood back and the tragedy of the thing is that he **almost** accepted Christ. He came right up to the line and stopped short.

How is it with you? Have you crossed that line? Is your soul firmly fixed with Jesus Christ? My friends, if it isn't, cross the line today. Don't put this thing off for that man committed the greatest tragedy in the universe, the tragedy of almost being a Christian. May the words of the Apostle Paul ring through this sanctuary as they rang through that palace of Festus in Caesarea: " would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except for these bonds."

BY THESE THINGS LIVE

Paul S. Rees, First Covenant Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota

"O Lord, by these things men live."—Isaiah 38:16.

What is required to turn life into **living?** Existence can be a species of death or it can be transformed into Life with a capital "L."

Some time ago the newspapers had a heart-tugging story that came out of Joplin, Missouri. On her thirty-second birthday a hopelessly crippled wife had given birth to her first child. For twelve years she had been an invalid, chained to her bed with arthritis. Three hours after her child had been delivered by Caesarian section the mother lay dead from shock. Then the doctor recalled the day when he had told her she would have only a fifty-fifty chance to survive the ordeal of motherhood. Not for a second was she daunted. Instead, she told him of the dream of the years that was about to be fulfilled. "All of my adult life," she said, "I have had a rendezvous with death. Now I have a rendezvous with life. My baby will live and will be loved. I am happy because never before have I had that much of a chance."

Yes, there are things that touch life so mysteriously, so wondrously, that it leaps up into **living.**

Hezekiah, king of Judah, found it so twenty-five hundred years ago and more. He had not been a bad man. Upon the contrary, he had been one of the finest, godliest rulers in Judah's history.

Now he is ill. It's a critical sickness, and death hangs threateningly over him. He prays for recovery. Isaiah, the prophet, speaks for God in assuring him that he will be spared and his health renewed. The sign of assurance given is that the shadow on their stair-case sun-dial will fall back ten steps, which it did.

After his recovery the king, grateful and inspired, wrote a psalm in which occur the words of our text: "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit."

In strict reference the phrase "these things" relates to what God **says** and **does** as indicated in the preceding verse. It recalls the words of our Savior in the hour of His temptation: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4).

In its broader reference the phrase may be taken in relation to the fruitful insights, the dynamic ideas, that came clearly to Hezekiah as he looked out on life from the very brink of the grave.

To be sure, there are throngs of people who wouldn't agree with Hezekiah. They have totally different views of what it is that men live by.

Here is a man who lives by his **sensations.** He is most concerned about the emotional charge, the physical or aesthetic thrill, that he can get out of this experience or that. A

thoughtful book would bore him stiff. Anything genuinely creative or nobly stern horrifies him. He exists — though he calls it living — by the titillations that he manages to bring to his five senses.

Here is another man who lives by skills. He knows he's several rounds up the ladder from the sensualist. To him life is tough. If you are going to make anything out of it, you must play your wits for all their worth. So he toils early and late, sharpening that self-reliant little brain of his, with small concern about the day when he'll be all bound up with his tensions like an over-wound clock or, worse still, will clutch at his chest as the terrifying pain of a heart attack wrings the cold sweat from his pores.

Or here is another who claims that he lives by the stars. He woos the goddess of luck. "Astrology — It Has Three Million Followers Who Live By the Stars!" So ran the headline of an article in one of our national magazines. A cute little Hollywood actress is cited who "gets a daily horoscope from her astrologer, never agrees to appear in a new picture unless the signs are right, and sometimes refuses to go to work at all on days when the planets have a bad aspect." If the Christians in Africa could send us some missionaries, it wouldn't be hard to find a field for them under the Stars and Stripes!

And then, to mention one more type, there's the chap who lives by stealing. Sometimes his stealing is illegal. It is larceny, or robbery, or fraud. More often it stays just inside the limits of the legal, but it's poorly disguised theft just the same. Someone has defined a gentleman as "one who puts more into life than he takes out." These stealers reverse that saying: they take out more than they put in. They write books or promote schemes, or run entertainment, that filches character and ideals and virtue from those who fall to them as prey.

By thrills, by cleverness, by chance, by scrounging — these are some of the ways by which the citizens in any community are trying to live.

How successful is it? Well, let's face it. For a little while it may look as if they were writing a big success story. It goes swimmingly with them.

But then — and often suddenly — the neon lights of whatever satisfactions they have been gaining splutter out. The thrills turn to aches, the skills become a trembling feebleness, the luck runs out, and the pilfering is overtaken by punishment.

Then what?

Even if you still have something to live **on**, you need something to live **by**.

Precisely here, I suspect, is where Hezekiah has a lesson for us. When a man comes back, after a hairbreadth escape from death, after a good look at the profile of eternity, he doesn't have to be told what wise old Socrates meant when, poking one day among all the foodstuffs of an Athenian market, he said to the bazaar keeper, "Can you tell me where those things can be had that are really essential to life?"

"O Lord, by these things men live!"

For one thing, **God!**

You cannot live without Him. In fine measure Hezekiah had known this for a long time. At the age of nearly forty he was able to say, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight" (v. 3).

But now there was a double crisis in the vise-like grip in which he was caught. A foreign army had laid siege to his city and a mortal illness had laid siege to him. In this situation of dark urgency the king discovered, in a new and nourishing way, the reality and the indispensability of God.

It's time some of us waked up to the unhappy fact that we have been taking God for granted. He's the great, vague Name. Preachers talk

eloquently about Him. The hymns speak sentimentally concerning Him. But there it ends — just a name!

Or He is the great Saftey Measure. Like a fire-escape. He is there to fall back on in an emergency.

Or he is the luck-bringing Mascot. We use Him as a guide to success. In certain lines of business, if your partner is a Roman Catholic, it may be smart for you to join some Protestant church!

Or He is the exacting Sovereign. He demands that you drop whatever you are doing, even if its pretty bad, and journey over to the church or shrine and pay your respects to Him — usually on a once-a-week basis. All that your piety means is that you have God on your weekly visiting list. The rest of the time you are on your own.

Contrast all that with the testimony of Hezekiah: "What shall I say? He hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul" (v. 15).

"By these things" — this living presence of the living, loving God — "shall men live."

The French thinker was right: "Only God is permanently interesting; beyond Him we cannot go, but short of Him we cannot stop."

II

Move on now to a second thing without which, as Hezekiah suggests, we cannot live. Its name is **forgiveness.**

Listen to this from the king's hymn of deliverance: "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back" (v. 17).

One recalls similar language in that glorious 103rd Psalm: "Bless the Lord, O my soul . . . who forgiveth all thine iniquities . . . As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (vs. 1, 3, 12).

The weighty sentence with which Dr. Leslie Weatherhead concludes a study of guilt in his volume on **Psychology, Religion, and Healing** reads: "I have never, in thirty years, known a psychological treatment which, in this field of guilt, could by itself obtain freedom for the patient without recourse to all that the Christian religion offers."

As pointing toward this conclusion Dr. Weatherhead tells of a psychiatrist with whom he is acquainted who had been working for weeks with a thirty-five - year - old man who was plagued with an intense fear of becoming insane. His symptoms were sleeplessness, loss of appetite, abdominal pains, and feelings of panic.

Under the psychiatrist's treatment the man improved but was not cured. One day the doctor, who was himself a practicing Christian, decided he must try a new approach. He said to the patient: "I have thought well over your case, and I have come to the conclusion that what you need to do if you want to get well is to turn to the God of your youth. You made a profession in your youth, and for years you have turned your back on God. If you repent and seek forgiveness, you will be restored to full health."

The man became angry, and stormed at the doctor that he did not come to him to be talked to like that. He flung down a fee and walked out.

Two weeks later he telephoned the doctor and asked for an appointment. It was arranged. When he came, he was in a completely different mood. There were tears as he told his counselor that he had been unable to forget what he told him about returning to God for forgiveness. At the end of a long session the man bowed in penitence and accepted the forgiveness that God gives through Jesus Christ the Savior.

The change that went beyond mere improvement, the change that spelled a **cure,** was so great that, said the doctor, within a month the symptoms were completely gone, the man was

gaining weight, and was happy and well. Two years later, when he moved to another part of the country, he was still fit, a released man who had found that you cannot live without forgiveness.

III

Let's take another step with Hezekiah: you cannot live without **prayer.**

Try now to capture some of the suggestiveness of these words: "Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord" (v. 2).

To the credit of this man let it be said that his praying was not a sudden reversal of form, a quick and desperate turning from prayerlessness to prayer, just because death was reaching greedily for his heart. It was the good king's **habit** to pray.

Still, I will not stay now to talk of the finer points of prayer. If we have any faith at all in the Biblical record, it was with Hezekiah a case of — pray or die. And it's still that!

So, man, whether you are habitually a man of prayer or one who, having been prayerless, feels now in the stress of things the urge to pray, get at it, I beg you! **Get at it!**

As for Hezekiah's prayer, it was **private:** "He turned his face toward the wall" (v. 2). It was the cry of a man alone with his God. Most of our praying will be that.

It was **passionate:** "And Hezekiah wept sore," or "wept aloud," as Moffatt translates it (v. 3). I make no special virtue out of tears, but at the same time I do not scorn them. What is important is that God does business with people who mean business with Him.

It was **potent:** "Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah . . . I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears; behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years" (v. 4, 5).

Now there are some extraordinary particulars about this instance of answered prayer. The fact that rarely, if ever, again has God chosen to reveal the duration of time in which a servant of His would continue to live does not make prayer less valid as a healing force in our lives.

Dr. George W. Crane, whose writings are widely read, says, "We physicians have seen many instances where dying folks were suddenly returned to health, as was King Hezekiah, for no apparent medical reason except the power of prayer." And Dr. Crane goees on to say: "The chief reason why America is becoming so neurotic is that prayer is not sufficiently prevalent."

Fresh in my mind is the opening of an article that I read only a few weeks after Pearl Harbor a decade and a half ago. With a whole world by that time engulfed in the red flood of war, Don Schooler wrote an impassioned plea for prayer under the caption, "Man Must Pray or Die." He commenced with some lines written, he said, by a thoughtful young lady to whom the "must" of prayer had come home powerfully. Said she:

Now the frontiers are all closed.
Prayer is no longer a theme for eloquence,
or a way of life for a few to choose whose hearts can desire it.
It is the sternest necessity; the unequivocal ultimatum.
There is no country we can flee to.
There is no man on earth who must not face this task now.
That was 1941!

If someone says, "Well, the war is over; the crisis has passed," my reply is, The deadliest threat is just over our heads, just ahead of our noses. There's no reason to change the caption: "Man Must Pray or Die!"

"By these things men live!"

Not by bread and butter, not by guns and greenbacks, not by Wall Street and Times Square!

Never!

But by the reality of God, the mercy of forgiveness, and the vitality of prayer!

YOU CAN'T BE TWO PEOPLE

Charles L. Allen, Grace Methodist Church, Atlanta, Georgia

One of the heaviest burdens of man is the burden of a guilty conscience. It often makes people physically sick. It leads to depression, despair and remorse. It can make a coward out of a person and leave him weak and filled with fear. Instead of facing up to life triumphantly, a sense of guilt causes one to "flee when no man pursueth."

One of the chief concerns of the Christian faith is the lifting of the burden of guilt. "He breaks the power of cancelled sin, He sets the prisoner free." Again we sing, "Happy day, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away." The assurance of forgiveness and the subsequent removal of the feeling of guilt is indeed the happiest and most power-giving experience which can come to man.

Let's look at an illustration. Jesus was resting a few days at a friend's house in Capernaum. However, the news spread that He was there and such a crowd gathered that they overflowed into the yard, completely surrounding the house. Four men came bringing a man stricken with paralysis. Not being able to get through the door to Jesus because of the crowd, they let the man down through the roof into Jesus' room.

Jesus saw the patient's paralyzed legs but He also saw deeper into the mind and soul of the man. He did not say, "Thy paralysis be healed." Instead, He said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Then Jesus told the paralytic to "arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way." The people were amazed and their faith strengthened.

The trouble with the man was not paralysis. Rather was his physical sickness a result of a much deeper trouble. He had done wrong and the fear produced by sense of guilt had taken possession of him. Many people have been momentarily paralyzed by fear. A mother was telling me recently of seeing her child run out into the street in front of an oncoming car. She told me she was paralyzed in her tracks. She could not move. She could not even cry out to the child. The car stopped and immediately her paralysis was over.

No doubt this man who was brought to Jesus was pretty much in the same state. Instead of an onrushing car toward his child, he saw the terrible judgment of God bearing down on him. He had committed some wrong. No one had told him about forgiveness. The sense of guilt had destroyed his courage and the resulting fear had left him paralyzed. Thus when his sins were forgiven, his paralysis was gone.

In my work as a minister, I frequently see paralyzed lives and sick spirits who need to hear the Savior say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

I

One might say that a person feels guilty because he sins. But that is not the full answer. There are people who commit the grossest of sins with no feeling of guilt. In fact, one of the tasks of the preacher is to produce a feeling of guilt thereby causing the guilty to seek salvation.

I read a sermon recently on "The Vanishing Sinner." It made the case that vast multitudes of people are not conscious at all of any sin. Therefore, they feel no need of repentance, confession, restitution and forgiveness. One of the tragedies of cancer is that it may cause no pain until it is too late to do anything about it.

Let the nerve in a tooth die and it may decay into its very roots without giving pain. And let a man so neglect and starve his spiritual nature that eventually he reaches the place that sin brings no sense of guilt and no feeling of pain. In some people, conscience has never been developed

nd in others it has been killed. Without a conscience one does not feel guilt.

Thus, there is a normal sense of guilt that is good. It is a sign that we still have spiritual life. It warns us of our danger and it stimulates our will. Someone has described a difference between a sheep and a hog. They both may fall in a mud hole. But the sheep is uncomfortable there and struggles to get out. The hog wallows in the mud happily and contentedly.

Walt. Whitman says in his poem, Song of Myself, "I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contained — they do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins." But while animals do not weep for their sins, neither do they write poetry.

II

In all normal people there are two natures. Plato likens man to a charioteer trying to drive two horses. The horses are Appetite and Spirit. The driver is Reason. If man had only one or the other horse, his job would be simple. But because we do drive both, there is conflict and out of that conflict comes guilt.

"There is so much good in the worst of us, and so much bad in the best of us." That is certainly true. Describing the inner life of man, Goethe said it is regrettable that nature has made only one man of him when there is material aplenty for both a rogue and a gentleman.

And both the rogue and the gentlemen inside are each struggling for supremacy. And when we give way to the rogue within us, we violate the feelings of the gentleman, and thereby we become ashamed, experience remorse, a sense of sin and unhappy feeling of guilt. Of one of his characters, H. G. Wells says, "He was not so much a human being as a civil war."

Of course, some people try to bring inner peace by trying to appease both sides of their nature. Dr. Jekyll tried that. He felt that he could let each of his inner selves live within him. So he worked out a plan for himself. During the day he was Dr. Jekyll, good and refined, living a life of service. At night he was Mr. Hyde, depraved, monstrous, savage animal.

Always just before dawn after a night of debauchery on the animal level, he would transform himself into the respected person of his other self. This went on for some time until finally one morning during the transformation, one of his hands refused to change. Though he exercised all the will power and strength he had, he could not change completely from Mr. Hyde to Dr. Jekyll. Thus he became the prisoner of his animal self, filled with hopeless remorse.

This is repeated again and again. Man feels the call to the high life. Created in the image of God, he instinctively desires to become like God. As Augustine put it, "Man is restles suntil he find his rest in Thee, O God." But at the same time, man might indulge his animal nature. He might play with his baser appetites. Until finally the animal appetite gets him out of control.

Thus, not being like God and yet not having the power within himself to master his animal nature, man becomes caught between his own inner conflicts. From society, from the teaching of his parents and others, and from the call of God direct, man creates an ideal self—a super ego.

Also there is in man the primitive savage. Between the two there is conflict out of which come many of our "nervous breakdowns," our tensions and our guilts.

Edward Sandford Martin has said it so well in his poem, "Within my earthly temple there's a crowd—There's one of us that's humble, one that's proud . . . There's one who's brokenhearted for his sins . . . There's one who repentant sits and grins . . . There's one who loves his neighbor

as himself . . . And one who cares for naught but fame and self . . . From such perplexing care I would be free . . . If I could once but determine which is me."

III

Some feelings of guilt come not from any conscious wrong doing, but rather because of failure to "fight the good fight." St. Paul says, "For we have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). As long as man is what he is, a creature in the image of God, then he can never be satisfied "short of the glory of God."

The answer for those torn inside by higher and lower impulses is not so much repentance and forgiveness, but rather inner unity through consecration. Put two horses in a pasture and each will go his own way by himself. But hitch those same two horses to a load to pull and they walk shoulder to shoulder without conflict.

So with the inner natures of man. Having no great life consecration man becomes disunited and at war with himself. But when he finds something to which he can completely give himself, his inner conflicts are resolved.

At forty-five Lincoln was a disappointed failure. In Robert Sherwood's play Lincoln says, "You talk about civil war—there seems to be one going on inside me all the time . . . it says in the Bible that a house divided against itself cannot stand, so I reckon there's not much hope. One of these days I'll just split asunder and part company with myself."

But Lincoln did not "split asunder." Instead, he found a great cause to which he gave himself completely and in so doing he became organized and unified. The inscription on the statue of Robert E. Lee in the Hall of Fame reads: "Duty then is the sublimest word in our language. Do your duty in all things. You cannot do more. You should never do less."

St. Paul looks inside himself and cries, "O wretched man that I am" (Romans 7:24). Then he looks outward and upward and said, I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). And finally he triumphantly declares, 'I have fought a good fight" (2 Tim. 4: 7).

Down in the hog pen the prodigal son was saved when he saw himself as a son with a father and a home and gave himself to that higher vision.

"He that loseth his life for my sake," said Jesus. That is, when you quit fighting with yourself and become inwardly organized through consecration to Him who is the greatest, then do you find life. No man can serve God and mammon. And no person is happy until he answers the prophet of old, "Choose ye this day whom you will serve."

WORTH QUOTING

E. Paul Hovey, The Federated Church, Lewiston, Idaho

It may be true that this is a "great time to be alive," but it is equally true that no era has felt greater strain and stress. The climate of our time is particularly inhospitable to the life of the spirit. Such is the speed of the age that our souls have little chance to catch up with our bodies, and breathless change gives us no opportunity to plan our direction. The old ways of faith tend to be demoded. The absolutes seem gone.

We are idolators. We worship the thing we have made with our own hands, and never have we had so wide a range of such idols. The pathetic result is individual and mass neuroticism. — J. E. Parry in **From Poise to Peace.**

* * *

News is verified gossip, and history is verified news — verified in the unlimited passage of time; for this reverification may take a few hours or

few thousand years. Scholars today are endlessly checking the legendary accounts of the victories of Genghis Khan, or seeking to reconcile conflicting testimony as to the exact words of Christ. For we know that a vast deal of unverified gossip slips into history's pages, to linger there for generations until the discovery of lost evidence brings us closer to the truth . . . The historian is handicapped in many ways, and one of the strangest of them is this: that when we human creatures have become quite familiar with a distorted version, that particular version becomes precious to us and we do not want anyone to monkey with it. — Burges Johnson in "The Good in Gossip."

* * *

Simple Arithmetic

Most people would be better off
To follow this one rule:
It's wise to take more food for thought
And not so much for fuel!

—Dorothy Rowland Martin

* * *

Judaism toiled and hoped and struggled and doubted: Paul possessed. The new life surging in his heart could betoken only one thing — God had accepted him. "Not guilty" had been the verdict. What, then, had become of his sins, that bitter and grievous burden which had been the problem of long, haunted years? God, in accepting him, had blotted them out. They were annulled . . . Justification and forgiveness went hand-in-hand . . . The sinner had been "justified." — James S. Steward in **A Man in Christ.**

* * *

An Englishman has written, after looking at many people rather carefully for many years, "Most people enjoy their pleasures without knowing it; they glide over them, and feed their minds on the miseries of life."

Does that describe us at all? Before we answer lightly, "Never touched me," let us ask ourselves if it isn't true that if we have an accident or misfortune, we think of it a long, long time, while if we have a piece of good fortune, we are glad for a time, but soon forget it. We ought not to "take things for granted but for gratitude."

— Halford E. Luccock

* * *

No one in the history of man has made so triumphantly as Jesus that appeal to the human heart which liberates life from the dominations and deceits of environment, and bestows upon it the increasing consciousness of the immortality of spiritual values.

* * *

It is just in this way that Christian faith is distinguished from all religion. No religion ever had the courage thus to go to the bitter end in giving man up, as the Christian faith does. All religions make an attempt at the self-justification of man — at least of a man as a religious subject. It is exclusively the faith in justification by grace alone which sacrifices not only the rational man, or the moral man, but the religious man as well." — Emil Brunner in **The Word and the World.**

* * *

The laws of the physical universe are unchangeable . . . These are fixed and permanent and will so remain until time shall be no more. But it is quite otherwise with human nature. The deeply ingrained prejudices of men and women, the purpose for which they live, their ambitions and loves and hates — all these can be altered, can be reversed, can be changed completely.

— John Sutherland Bonnell

* * *

It is my firm conviction that a self-centered church is as un-Christian as a self-centered person.

— G. Ross Freeman

* * *

The goodness of a religion is best judged by the goodness of its adherents. We are conquered by example.

* * *

Some time ago two articles appeared in remarkable, possibly accidental, juxtaposition on the editorial

page of "The New York Herald Tribune." One reported and commented on the case of a four-year-old Canadian boy. The other, entitled "The Perils of Alertness," was contributed by Britain's famous military critic and historian, Capt. B. H. Liddell Hart.

Little Ronald Tisdale, of Montreal, swallowed a bottle of sleeping pills and was rushed to St. Justine's Hospital, where he was put into a resuscitator, his stomach pumped out, and he was dosed with every available antidote. Nothing availed; sunk in the deepest coma, his life was flickering to a quick close.

Dr. Andre Soucy had read of a powerful new British antipoison called Megimide. A call was put in to the Poison Control Center of the N. Y. Health Dept. The center had half an ounce — a sample imported from Great Britain.

At the moment of the call, late at night, an Eastern Airlines plane was about to take off for Montreal. The 48 passengers . . . were asked whether they would endure a delay and told the reason. The "yes" was unanimous. A car raced to the airport. A waiting car in Montreal rushed to the hospital. In a few minutes the little boy stirred in his coma, soon he was conscious and spoke. He was saved — in a Canadian hospital, by a British drug, furnished by an American institution.

The Tribune commented: "Only one life was at stake, but what . . . resources . . . were called into play to save it! Phones, autos, planes, interference with vital schedules, the single-minded concentration on putting everyone's plans and purposes secondary to the saving of one boy's life"; and further, "When one considers that the world now enters a phase in which the pressing of a single button may shortly be able to extinguish whole cities, nations, populations . . . one can only hope that this lesson . . . may, somehow, have its application . . . "

Capt. Liddell Hart, in the adjoining space, warned that the catastrophe envisioned might happen by accident. The government has authorized local commanders to unleash their own bombs if they believe their bases are in "imminent peril" of destruction. . . . Retaliatory orders would be transmitted by code. Suppose (under tension and with overstretched nerves) the code word was misused or misunderstood! This happening during World War I and II caused fatalities.

There on one page are two sides of a picture. A network of governments, hospitals, science, communications goes instantly into motion to save one young life, that one man might instantly destroy along with millions of others. — Dorothy Thompson in "Ladies' Home Journal."

* * *

Every time we lose courage, we lose several days of our life.

— Maurice Maeterlinck.

* * *

Man's mind, stretched to a new idea, never goes back to its original dimensions.—Oliver Wendell Holmes.

* * *

Rudyard Kipling gave a commencement address . . . after advising the graduates against an overconcern for wealth, position or glory, he said, "Some day you will meet a man who cares for none of these things . . . and then you will know how poor you are!"

What an unintended description of Jesus! He cared for none of these things. And when we look steadily at Him, He makes us think how poor we are. Think on this quality of Jesus. — Halford E. Luccock.

WESLEY P. FORD
CLARENCE J. FORSBERG
ROBERT E. GOODRICH, JR.

New Year Perspectives

FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND

Wesley P. Ford, Central Christian Church, Pasadena, California

Memory is a vital aid. By it we know the things that make for life, and are able to surround ourselves with experiences from the past that make our days pleasant. But memory, unless balanced by the ability to forget, will keep other experiences hanging like dead weights upon us. One who is bound to yesterday's sorrow, or failure, or sin, will miss the joy that each new day offers. With the setting of the sun, with the closing of the year, life is meant to be free from the past that it might take full advantage of the new. We need to remember to forget.

Paul said, "One thing I do — forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on." Because he desired to do the one thing most needful, he knew he must forget. Paul had a past; he was a persecutor of the Christians. Also he had many inadequate and unworthy experiences, memory of which would hinder reaching the larger goal. So, "forgetting, I press on."

I

Consider some things we do well to forget. One is yesterday's error, yesterday's sin which God, in His graciousness, has already forgiven. It is easy to talk about God's love and God's mercy, but it is not always easy to accept the forgiveness of that love. Yet when we remain unwilling to take the forgiveness which God offers we limit our usefulness.

Are we unwilling because we do not trust God? Jesus said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." The scribes rebukingly said, "It is blasphemy. Who can forgive sins but God alone?" We are not like the scribes, for we recognize that Jesus was God's spokesman and that God does forgive. But there is little difference in the end result if we will not accept what God offers. God's message is, take forgiveness, forget and press on toward the new.

We ought also to forget our accumulated virtues. One branch of Christendom in its early life made much of earned merit. Good deeds were recorded on the ledger until one had a credit balance. But to face life honestly is to recognize that in the matter of good deeds one never gets ahead. Every day is new. Each day brings new temptations, new tests and demands new strength. No one gets by on yesterday's fine achievement. Out of the past we bring habits, controls, methods, and discipline, but never an extra supply of earned merit. This is why Jesus said, "Forgive seventy times seven." One never gets through being good! Forgetting the good we did yesterday we press on, facing the test of this hour.

And we will be helped, too, if we can forget established patterns. Through disciplined effort one can learn to read more rapidly and to run faster. Paul's figure was that of a runner. Forgetting the past, forgetting the old gait, the slower pace, I press on. When yesterday's habit becomes an alibi for slow motion today it is time to forget yesterday's habit. No matter how much or how little has been our ability a change of pace is possible. "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold the new has come." For the new person which each is meant to be the old patterns are inadequate and we profit by forgetting.

II

But even if we would forget, a major question becomes, how? How do we get our past sins and old notions out of mind? Modern psychiatry has developed a number of techniques, not one of which has improved upon the old Biblical method which says the best way to forget the past is to be busy with the new. Stymied at the Red Sea, Moses began to share the doubts and the fears of the people. And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry for me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward." So Moses gave the marching orders to go forward against what seemed the impossible. And they moved forward. For us the sea may not part in some strange manner, but bridges can and will be built. Obstacles will fall when men with determination go forward. When Divine will is matched by human endeavor neither sea nor mountain can stymie progress.

Teen-agers have a phrase which I like. They say to one who seems in the way, "Get lost." This is what God said to Moses. Why do you cry for me? Get lost in a great adventure. Pull up your stakes and move. If the Israelites had remembered only the past they would have sat by the shore complaining about their inabilities until their dooms day. But finally they responded to a Divine injunction. The soul's one road is always forward. There comes a time when God says, "Forget your inability and go. Get lost in daring adventure."

When we are willing to relinquish established patterns, to pull up stakes and run risks we make amazing discoveries. A century ago some who gave up old securities and left everything behind, found gold in the West. There are ahead now, for those who will take the adventure, discoveries more precious than gold.

To adventure with God and really give Him a priority is to discover not only that we can do with less for ourselves but that we can do with less and love it. We love it because of the new security. To travel overseas tourist class by air is to be limited to 44 pounds of baggage. When preparing for my first such venture, a friend of much travel experience said, "Cut out everything except the absolute essentials. Then take half of them, and you can make it." It was good advice. There comes a time when we must think more about the destination than the baggage. Through the years we have been multiplying our desires and increasing the baggage load while allowing the vision of the goal to grow dim. If God's kingdom is the destination we had better take a look at the luggage and then recognize that we can't take it with us.

When Vassaar College for Women was started in 1861, each student was allowed two hooks, one for her Sunday dress and one for her weekday dress. Quite a contrast to modern needs. In 1854 a Methodist minister wrote, "My soul is deeply pained, O Lord. What will become of thy people? Several of our members wear earrings. Some of them wear finger rings. Lord, pity them!" We are not suggesting such stringency, but we are suggesting that each of us needs carefully to weigh this matter of baggage and destination. Those who have traveled light for God's sake have found the highest goal for themselves and others.

III

Another discovery we make in going forward is that we can grow. I remember frequent visits as a youth to a home in which were three children. In one closet each had a mark on the wall. At regular intervals the height of each was recorded and marked by age and date. It is an interesting record but it ought not to stop with physical maturity. With the close of another year each of us could profit by backing up to the wall and being measured against last year's mark. Of what real value the old year unless there has been some growth?

This principle applies to us as per

sons and also to our collective life as a church. What would our growth marks reveal over the past 50 years? I fear that each year's growth has been limited by the memory of the previous year. Now we need to forget what we were, as inspired by Jesus Christ and with our hands in the hand of God, we become his redeeming agent. Margaret Applegarth, in her stimulating book, **Twelve Baskest Full,** says that some back country women deep in South Carolina included in their report at a church gathering this note. "We ain't what we want to be: **but** we ain't what we used to be; **and**—we ain't what we're going to be!"

To forget our limited past and move out to possess tomorrow is to discover that we too can be used in God's purpose now. One reason that God cannot do more through us is that we settle down too soon. We settle down prematurely to live at half or one-third capacity. The Christian faith never allows one the opportunity of settling down in routine patterns of comfort and pleasantness. A new year calls us to move out of the past with a courage and a boldness that we have never tried before! Such is the road of life. When we are willing to travel with limited personal baggage because the goal is high, faith and joy and strength are found along the way. The final victory is that men and women and boys and girls are led to wholeness with God through Christ our Redeemer. So forgetting what lies behind, we press on!

Several years ago I heard a story which speaks of man's bravery under some circumstances. A new recruit was among the small crew of a Coast Guard vessel. During a violent storm a distress call came from out at sea. The commander ordered the little group to the rescue in the face of the storm. The recruit hesitated saying, "We can't go out. We'll never get back." To which the seasoned commander replied, "We have to go out. We don't have to come back."

There is a time in our personal lives and in the life of the church when we must break with familiar moorings and surroundings; when we must forget old notions and inadequate opinions and move at God's command, unselfishly in quest of His kingdom. "Forgetting what lies behind I press on toward — the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

LIVING UP TO THE BEST IN US

Clarence J. Forsberg, First Methodist Church, Eugene, Oregon

One of the most encouraging and interesting recent news items was about a little girl named Frances Van Arnam. Frances, who is 16 months old, is suffering from a very rare malady, the name of which I cannot pronounce. In layman's language, it is a physical condition in which the body cannot properly digest or absorb proteins, and which leads to serious injury to the brain tissues, and consequent mental retardation. There is an antidote for it, a special kind of medicine which costs so much that it is out of the range of an average family. The story indicated that if she could have this medicine for the next few years, the condition would correct itself and she would be able to live a normal, happy life.

The story had no sooner been made public, than people began to respond with offers of help. Within a few hours, a special trust fund had been set up at a local bank to receive contributions, and total strangers were adding to the fund. Her father, who works in the woods as a choke-setter, was quoted as saying, "It is wonderful . . . why, strangers have been coming to our door, asking how they can help. I just don't know how to thank them." And her mother said simply, "I never knew there were so many

nice people on earth."

Now I suppose that by any objective, long range point of view, this was a comparatively insignificant item of news. If on the other hand, what Jesus taught about his Heavenly Father was true, then there is nothing insignificant about the story of Frances. Jesus said, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." He also said that God marked the fall of a lowly sparrow, and that we were worth more than many sparrows. I think we would be safe in assuming that Jesus would have said that Frances was worth more than many sputniks.

I don't ordinarily find my texts in the newspaper, but this one deserves our attention because it has some important things to say to us about human nature, and about ourselves.

I

In the first place, this story reminds me that there is more basic goodness in human nature than we are sometimes willing to concede.

By and large, we take a pretty dismal view of human nature. If we are concerned at all about the world and events, we tend to get discouraged when we see the selfishness, the evil, and the cruelty of which ordinary people seem capable. Theodore Parker Ferris recently preached a sermon on the question, "Why Is There So Much Goodness in the World." He said in his sermon that he did not remember ever being asked that question. People had frequently asked him why there was so much evil in the world, and how life could get so distorted and so perverted. But no one had ever asked him to account for the unexpected goodness that keeps cropping up in human nature. I would have to say the same thing. Most of us who think in terms of theology are preoccupied with problems like evil and sin. When Mrs. Van Arnam said, "I didn't know there were so many nice people on earth," my immediate reaction was that probably she would not have discovered it by listening to us preachers.

Oftentimes "we tend to set ourselves up as judge and jury," and we spend our time condemning people for their failings and shortcomings. Dr. Balcomb relates an incident involving Wendell Phillips, the great reformer and orator. Phillips was busily reading on a train when a self-assured stranger poked a religious tract into his hands, and very piously said, "My business is to save souls from hell." Without looking up, Phillips replied, "Then I'd suggest that you go there and attend to it!" Well, it was a good answer and a deserved rebuke. Many times we see people with a jaundiced eye, and we are quite ready to believe the worst about them.

When a story like the story of Frances comes along, it ought to remind us that there is a basic kind of goodness in human nature. One of the most interesting things to me about the news story is that no one bothered to ask irrelevant questions. No one asked for example whether the Van Armans were Protestants or Catholics. No one tried to find out what their political affiliations were, or whether or not they belonged to the right lodge or fraternity. No one asked, as far as I know, about their creed, or their race, or their nationality. Even more significantly, no one wanted to know if he would ever get his money back, or if the investment was really worthwhile. It was simply a case of a little girl whose future happiness was in the balance, and everyone wanted to know that it would be guaranteed. At our best, this is what we are really like. We respond to other people's needs, we are sensitive, and eager to help.

What is the truth about human nature? Is it corrupt and evil at its center? Is man destined to sin and selfishness and profanity? I think not. Instead it seems to me that there is more basic goodness in human nature than most of us are willing to

oncede.

II

Now in the second place, this story eminds me that there is something rustrating about human nature.

If we are willing to concede that here is a basic goodness about man, we must also admit that we do not often live consistently at our best. A mall boy was whistling as he walked down the street, and he met an even maller boy, who asked, "Can't you whistle any better than that?" The lder boy said, "Of course I can," and e proceeded to demonstrate. After moment's reflection, the smaller boy asked, "Then why don't you do your best all the time?"

That is the heart of the problem. Why aren't we consistently at our best? Why is it that a story like the one in the papeer can cause us to go out of our way to do something completely unselfish and generous, only to turn around and behave in a less than noble fashion in another situation. Some people, of course, blame this on the devil. A mother scolded her little boy for slapping and biting his sister. She said, "Son, it was the devil that made you do that." "Oh no it wasn't," he said. "The devil may have made me slap her, but biting her was my own idea!" Unfortunately, we do not always have that clear an idea as to why we fail to live at our best.

I would like to suggest that one reason why we fail is that we are so successful in isolating ourselves from other people and their troubles. There are countless other little children who are in similar kinds of difficulty as Frances, but we simply do not see them and we manage somehow to keep them out of our lives.

In another community with which I am well acquainted, there were two families who lived side by side, and who engaged in an old-fashioned family feud that was always bitter. One of the families happened to be in my church, and the other family was Catholic. Religion did not enter into the feud, but they simply disliked each other with real intensity. Both families happened to be among my friends, and it was really very difficult to visit either one. They lived outside of town, and they had built a high fence which kept them from the necessity of seeing each other. There was an even higher fence of mistrust and suspicion which kept them apart. The Catholic family had by the far the nicer home, with a very lovely garden. The Methodist family kept livestock, and they "happened" to build a pigsty adjacent to the fence dividing the property. I have no way of knowing that it was deliberate, but the odor of the pigsty was very effective in spoiling the pleasure of the neighbor's garden! One morning two pet ducks were found shot, and of course, the assumption was that the neighbors had done it. The feud was so childish that it was silly, but it was nonetheless bitter.

Then one day the woman whose ducks had been shot, happened to hear a screech of brakes on the highway, and the chilling scream of a child in pain. She rushed down to the road and found that the little neighbor girl had been struck by a car. Immediately she got her own car and took the child's mother, her sworn enemy, with her to the hospital, following the car that had the little girl. There was no time now to talk about pigstys or dead ducks. A little child was critically hurt, and two mothers found themselves with no wall between them. Day after day there were fresh flowers from the Catholic garden in the hospital room of the little Methodist girl, and at last report, although the fence still stood, the feud was a thing of the past.

Isn't this one of the reasons why we fail to live up to our best? We have built so many fences that keep us from seeing our neighbors and their need. Our fences are constructed of suspicion, mistrust, ignorance, pre-

judice, and apathy. It is when someone else's trouble leaps the fence, and the wall between us is broached, that we show our true colors.

You've heard of the man who said, "Sure, I believe in the human race. All of my family have belonged to it, and some of my wife's family too." Well, we need to see ourselves and our neighbors as members not only of the human race, but the same family, if we are ever going to overcome this strange inconsistency of ours when it comes to living at our best.

III

The third thing I want to say is that somehow or other the best in us is released when we come into contact with the highest and the best that there is.

If you have ever taken part in team sports, you will remember that even a mediocre player plays better when he is on the same team with someone who is great. Not only that, a team plays its best against good competition, and a poor opponent can make even a good team look bad.

This is a clue, it seems to me, on how the best within us can be released. It is released by coming into contact with the highest and the best there is. Christopher Fry in his play, "The Dark Is Light Enough," has these words: "If she should die, her gravestone would play havoc with the life of the mason who carved it. She has a touching way of backing a man up against eternity, until he hardly has the nerve to remain mortal."

Does that remind you of anyone? It reminds me of Jesus. Jesus had the capacity of not only discovering the good in people, but of releasing it so that it could come into its own. He did it for fishermen, and taxcollectors, and street-walkers, and publicans, and sinners. He was the one who saw something of granite in the character of Peter, the big fisherman, who had been so erratic and unstable. He was the one who saw a different side to Zaccheus, the little man whose moral stature had seemed no bigger than his physical stature. It was in Jesus' presence that they felt themselves "backed up against eternity, until they hardly had the nerve to remain mortal."

This, it seems to me, was the strategy of Jesus. He did not scold men for their faults. He did not condemn them and make them aware of their imperfection. Nor did he constantly tell them what they ought to do. Instead he invited them into his company, and the impression of his goodness and kindness had a way of bringing the best out of them.

George Bernard Shaw has a story called "The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet." Blanco is pictured as an ugly, mean, vicious man who lived a life of crime. He had only one good deed to his credit when he was finally hung. He had stolen a horse, and was riding away from the village with the police in pursuit. As he rides along he meets a woman with a child, who stops him. Her child is terribly sick, and she begs Blanco to take him to the hospital. It is back in the village from which he has just come, and to go back means to be captured and maybe killed. But after only a moment's hesitation, the ugly criminal stoops over, takes the child in his arms, and turns the horse back toward the village. He is arrested and taken off to prison to await trial. No one can understand why he gave himself up to save this child. It was so unlike him. But at the trial he tells why: "God made me because he had a job for me to do. And I had to come along and do it, hanging or no hanging. And I tell you it didn't feel rotten. It felt good, and great. Anyhow I got the rotten feeling off me for once in my life, and I'd go through hell to get it off again."

There is a basic goodness in human nature, even though we somehow fail to live up to the best in us. And the good news is that you don't have to go through hell to bring it out. It can come out unexpectedly, when

ddenly you find yourself face to ce with someone's need. And the st chance we have of living up to e best that is in us is to place ourselves in daily and constant contact with the Highest that we know, which of course, is Jesus.

Clarence J. Forsberg.

VE CAN'T GET BY WITHOUT THESE

Robert E. Goodrich, Jr., First Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas

Text: John 10:7-10.

Did you ever wonder what Jesus ally meant when He said, "I am me that you might have life"? Obously, He couldn't have been speakg of physical life: man possessed is long before Jesus was born in thlehem. So He must have been lking about a quality or a dimenon in life which makes it more than ere physical existence. Thus a part His mission was to save us from ing before we have lived.

This is a dreadful possibility! We ay hold on to physical life for 20 40 or 60 or 90 yeaars or more. one of us likes to contemplate its d. A catrtoon recently pictured an derly man in a hospital, saying to e nurse by his bed as she tried to assure him: "Stop saying that I'll e to be 90; I am 90." We don't ant to let go of physical life. here's a "will to live" which operates en below the level of consciousness! nd yet our real concern should be at we may not die before we live!

And this is what Jesus came to pre-nt, not for some of us, but all of . He knew what was in man, and is explains His confidence that ery person has the potential for al life. Look at the way He chose s disciples from the most ordinary, eryday persons, yet daring to comt to their hands the eternal gospel. e knew our potential. We won't ve to die before we live.

All of this may have a special imrtance for us just now as we get ady to journey into the unchartered nd of a new year. 1959 can be more an another year of existence for ; it can be something which is real-new. It could mark the beginning life in a new dimension.

But this isn't inevitable and it doesn't happen automatically with a change of calendar or address. Before ever we begin to live, we must have certain essentials which Jesus came to give to us. We can't get by without them.

I

For one thing, we must have an invisible means of support. This is the phrase which somebody used to describe what we ordinarily call a religious faith — an invisible means of support. It provides staying power and standing power, saves us from easy defeat by circumstances, holds our life together. Our faith is this important to every one of us. We can't get by without this.

Yet there is a tendency in some quarters to look down on religious faith. Steeped in the scientific spirit of our age, some try to persuade us that we can't live by faith, we've got to have facts. Faith was for a more credulous age in the past.

The truth is, though, that whoever we are and wherever we are we actually walk by faith every day of our lives. Life isn't possible without it. How do we know that the roof over our heads isn't going to collapse in fifteen seconds and smother us? We don't! We simply have faith that the house or building was constructed correctly. How do we know, when we're driving down the highway, that our front wheel isn't going to come off and send us hurtling into the ditch? We don't. We simply have faith in the manufacturer of the car or the garage which last worked on it. How do we know the milk we had for breakfast this morning came from a contented cow? We drink our milk

by faith in the dairy which provided it.

And we could go on and on for, be sure, we live by the practice of faith. It's as natural as breathing and as necessary as bread. But if we're ever to know life in the dimension Jesus came to give to us, if we're not to go under when the dark and difficult circumstances come, then we must use this capacity for faith to lay hold on God, as it were. We must let faith provide a channel for His help and power and strength, giving us that invisible means of support which will keep us standing even when life would beat us down.

II

But neither can we get by without some standards to live by that are too sacred to forsake. In other words, we must accept some boundaries for our life, principles we will not violate, moral laws we will not forget. After all, without rules there's always chaos, isn't there? In a rough, tough section of a city, a man was trying to teach some boys how to play football. He explained the rules of the game and put the ball in play. It didn't take long for the game to disintegrate into a kind of free-for-all with general disorder and confusion. 'Fellows, fellows," he called to them, "come on, remember the rules, remember the rules!" "To heck with the rules," one of them answered, "let's get on with the game."

But of course, there isn't any game without the rules. And neither can there be any life worthwhile without rules, standards, boundaries and principles which are kept and honored as too sacred to forsake.

Furthermore, this is the only way we'll ever be free to achieve anything or become anything in life. All freedom is dependent upon restrictions and disciplines. Sometimes we don't understand this. Sometimes a person will even say, "I'm tired of rules and laws. I want to be free to live my life. I'm tired of being hemmed in!"

But there's no real freedom without restrictions. You can prove it for yourself by a simple experiment. We're free. This is a free country. So try driving your car down town and parking it in the middle of the street. You're a free person! Park wherever you wish. And if you don't want to go to that much trouble, then just drive down the left hand side of the highway or the street. And when a car with a flashing red light and a wailing siren drives up beside you and a man in uniform motions you over to the side of the road, just tell him to go paddle his own canoe, that this is a free country. Go ahead and prove how free you are. And call your pastor to come by the jail and visit you this week.

Or, if you don't want to run that kind of risk, then seek out two boys ages 15 and 19, who were being held in a certain city jail a few months ago. They were charged with attempted robbery; they were after dope. They wouldn't be bothered by moral standards or principles. They wanted to prove their freedom to do what they pleased. But, talk it over with them. See if this brought them happiness or fulfillment of life. See if they felt really free there behind the bars. Of course, I don't know just what they would say to you today, but I do know that the 19 year old cut his wrists a couple of days after his arrest. And a day or two later, the 15 year old tried the same method of suicide.

You see, the only way that we can ever be free to realize the potentiality that is within us or fulfill the tremendous expectations which Christ has for us, the only way that we can ever know what it is to live, is to accept some standards, draw some boundaries for our life.

And here again, Jesus helps us. For He gave us the Sermon on the Mount in which His words are the sound of the silent laws of God and His universe. He didn't give these principles for His sake, but for our sake.

We can't get by without these principles and moral standards that are too sacred to forsake! This is the only way we can be really free to live.

III

And then, we must also have something to live for, a purpose, a destination, some reason for existence.

In New York City there is a doctor whose specialty, according to **Guideposts Magazine**, is helping older people. Perhaps you would expect that in working with people of 75 years and upwards he would try to teach them patience and persuade them to settle down, to enjoy the thrill of a rocking chair, and to remember that they're only old once. But this doctor works on an entirely different principle. In fact, here is the prayer which he teaches them to pray sincerely:

Hear me, Lord. Give me not pallid ease:
Give me races to run, mountains to climb, burdens to lift.
Give me not nations to rule:
Give me people to love, worlds to serve, and God to know.

Do you see what's involved in this prayer? Something to live for, something to strive for. And through this prayer, guided by the doctor, many an older person at long last has found life.

But it holds for every person of any age. People do not differ so much in talents and capacities as they differ in determination and purpose. An ordinary person, enchanted with a purpose, can achieve extraordinary victories.

America's Olympic Champion Bob Richards, the polevaulting parson, proves this. There's been a lot of discussion about what makes him a great athlete, why he's a champion. It's certainly not his physical build. He doesn't have the long arms of a pole-vaulter. His legs are not powerful. He doesn't have the height he should have. But one of Bob's chief competitors, a marine named Earl Ponder, probably put his finger on the reason when he said, "Bob Richards doesn't win so much with natural ability. He beats us by sheer determination backed up by prayer and work. His dedication and purpose make the difference."

We can't get by without this. And again, Jesus furnished us with a cause to live for in the challenge to take up a cross and follow Him. It may be sometimes dangerous and often times unpopular, but it would guarantee for us the thrill of knowing what it is to live. Our purpose could become to work with God for the dawn of some better day upon earth.

Dr. Luccock recalls a phrase often used in the announcement of the postponement of the production of a play or a movie: "Casting problems are holding up production." Maybe everything else is ready, script and scenery are all set, but there are casting difficulties. Who will play the parts? Who can make the characters come to life? Who can give the play reality?

So everything may be ready in the mind and heart of God, and the setting is the world, but "casting problems hold up production." "Who will go for us and whom shall I send?"

Something to live for! An ordinary person enchanted with a purpose can achieve extraordinary victories.

We can't get by without these which Christ came to give to everyone of us: an invisible means of support, standards that are too sacred to forsake, and a cause to live for. With these it may be that the coming year will be new for us, or more correctly, we will be new for the coming year. And we'll know what He meant when He said, "I am come that ye might have life."

HUMAN BEINGS IN THE HAND OF GOD —from page 2

and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand"—(John 10: 28-29).

This symbol speaks to us of Divine

protection, guidance and trust. On the cross Jesus expressed his complete trust: "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). And the relevance of this faith is also for the living. "Let Thy hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen Thy precepts" (Ps. 119:173).

Many of us find ourselves between two extreme thoughts regarding God's protection. One thought is that God protects us from all danger, an idea likely to slip into our consciousness if not carefully guarded against. The first article of the Apostles' Creed affirms, "God protects and preserves me from all danger." A boy in a confirmation class suggested that God doesn't protect us from accidents caused by people. As the students became certain of this, they began to think of hurricanes and volcanos and they decided that God doesn't always protect us from these dangers either. God protects us, but certainly not from all danger. Otherwise one might tempt God by jumping off high places or doing something else equally foolish. (Matt. 4:5-7).

On the other hand, one may not believe that God can help at all. Recently a man said that God is the word which sums up our aspirations and ideals, "That which is noblest and best in society." If God is the summary of our ideals, God changes from generation to generation, from civilization to civilization. God is then the product of our thinking and dreaming, instead of the ultimate Cause. The Biblical thought, "God made man in his own image," would have to be reversed if we held to the notion that man created God!

The thought of being held in th hand of God is more than symbol cally true when we think of air w breathe and ground we walk or Without God we could not exist fo a single hour. We depend upon Hi in time and eternity. We think o ourselves as children being loved an led by our Heavenly Father.

Take Thou my hand and lead me unto the end;
In life and death I need Thee, O blessed Friend;
I cannot live without Thee for one brief day;
Lord, be Thou ever near me, and lead the way.

The value of simple trust in Go for daily guidance and protection ma become clear to us through some out standing person. A little known per son who brought this truth to me wa a single lady who had had littl formal schooling. She was filled wit joy, but not the kind of joy tha comes by remembering a purple sig which says, "Keep Smiling." He good cheer wasn't put on for com pany. She daily trusted in God' guidance. I saw her every day fo more than eighteen years, for sh was my aunt who helped father an mother raise a family of six healthy children. I wish all of us could hav the faith, peace, and joy that I kno were hers in the midst of work, dif ficulties, and tribulations.

The illustration at the head of this col umn is from Mr. Rest's splendid book, Ou Christian Symbols, revised and enlarge edition, and is reprinted by permission o his publisher, Christian Education Press Philadelphia 2, Penna.—The Editors.

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

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sermons on many subjects — the Kingdom of God, the Incarnation, holiness, prayer, the nature of religious faith, among others — by one of the great minds of Western Christianity. The range of Dean Inge's scholarship and the depth of his convictions are in this book, but there i none of the "gloom" with which pop ular journalism so often identifie him. This is a book of radiant Chris tion optimism. (Harper & Brothers 140 pp., $3.)